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ABSTRACT

This brochure sketches the range of services provided by visiting teachers in the Texas Public Schools and offers suggestions for establishing a visiting teacher program in other school systems. The rationale for the visiting teacher program is outlined first followed by an explanation of who the visiting teacher is. Twenty functions of the visiting teacher are then listed. The visiting teacher's function as a member of an interdisciplinary team is diagramed. Finally, some guidelines and procedures for initiation of visiting teacher program are offered. Topics covered in discussion of guiding principles for program initiation are: planning; organizing; implementation; allocation and the Texas School Code; qualifications; certification; and special assignment areas. (MM)

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The Visiting Teacher in Texas Public Schools

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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Texas Education Agency

Austin, Texas
1975

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Reviews of local education agencies pertaining to compliance with Title VI Civil Rights Act of 1964 and with specific requirements of the Modified Court Order, Civil Action No. 5281, Federal District Court, Eastern District of Texas, Tyler Division are conducted periodically by staff representatives of the Texas Education Agency. These reviews cover at least the following policies and practices:

(1) acceptance policies on student transfers from other school districts;

(2) operation of school bus routes or runs on a non-segregated basis;

(3) non-discrimination in extracurricular activities and the use of school facilities;

(4) non-discriminatory practices in the hiring, assigning, promoting, paying, demoting, reassigning or dismissing of faculty and staff members who work with children;

(5) enrollment and assignment of students without discrimination on the ground of race, color or national origin;

(6) non-discriminatory practices relating to the use of a student's first language; and

(7) evidence of published procedures for hearing complaints and grievances.

In addition to conducting reviews, the Texas Education Agency staff representatives check complaints of discrimination made by a citizen or citizens residing in a school district where it is alleged discriminatory practices have or are occurring.

Where a violation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act is found, the findings are reported to the Office for Civil Rights, Department of Health, Education and Welfare.

If there be a direct violation of the Court Order in Civil Action No. 5281 that cannot be cleared through negotiation, the sanctions required by the Court Order are applied.

The Visiting Teacher in Texas Public Schools

Visiting Teacher Services
Division of Guidance Services
Texas Education Agency
201 East 11th Street
Austin, Texas 78701

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Foreword

To support the philosophy, aims, and goals for public school education in Texas, school districts employ many special service personnel in addition to instructional staff. One of these special service personnel is the visiting teacher. This professional person facilitates the achievement of these goals by providing intensive home-school liaison services which are designed to improve the learning process, attendance, and the involvement of parents in the educational process.

M. L. Brockette
Commissioner of Education

Preface

"The Visiting Teacher in Texas Public Schools" is designed to describe the broad range of services provided by the visiting teacher and to offer suggestions for establishing the visiting teacher program.

Acknowledgment is made of the work of the committee which conducted an intensive study of the role of the visiting teacher in Texas schools and developed this bulletin. Members of the committee include: Dr. Ann Arnold, visiting teacher, Fort Worth Independent School District; Anna Davis, director, pupil personnel services, Galena Park Independent School District; Radford Gregg, administrative assistant, pupil personnel services, Fort Worth Independent School District; Laverne Marr, administrative assistant, pupil personnel services, Dallas Independent School District; Natalie Ring, special education supervisor, Corpus Christi Independent School District; Dr. Luisa Sanchez, coordinator for visiting teachers, Austin Independent School District; Dr. Jeanne Young, associate professor, Institute of Behavioral Sciences, Sam Houston State University; and Dr. James V. Clark, Sylvia Garcia, Janie Jones, John Ridener, Dr. James A. Salmon, Octavia Smith, Eliseo Torres, Ernesto Zamora of the Texas Education Agency.

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Rationale for Visiting Teachers

The worth, dignity, and uniqueness of each pupil must be respected and understood.

The rights and responsibilities of each individual in relation to self-direction and choice must be supported.

The central role in the educational development of the pupil is the responsibility of the teacher.

The primary responsibility of the upbringing of the child belongs to the parent.

The home is vital to and intimately linked with achievement.

A major function of the visiting teacher is to enhance the educational experience of the child by working to maximize the student's ability to achieve in school.

The range of service includes all pupils.

Who the Visiting Teacher Is

The visiting teacher is one of a team of support persons each unique in training and expertise, employed by the school district to meet the special needs of students. The visiting teacher seeks to involve the parent in the educational process in order to develop a home-school educational partnership which will assist parents in reinforcing the learning experiences of their children thereby helping to improve the student's school performance. The visiting teacher gathers pertinent information from the classroom and school, home, and community; participates with the other professional personnel in the assessment of student needs and in the planning for meeting student needs; and provides direct casework services to students within the school, community, and home setting where appropriate.

Functions of the Visiting Teacher

The visiting teacher serves students, parents, school, and community through performing the following functions:

- serves as caseworker/counselor, consultant, and coordinator of services to students and their families.
- serves as a member of a school team that assesses the needs of the school population and the community served and assists in the planning of a developmental program of activities to meet those needs.
- works to enhance the environments--home, school, and community--to create a setting which maximizes the student's ability to function and achieve in school.
- prepares and utilizes case study techniques which include an hypothesis or tentative statement of problem areas and plans for solution.
- assists the school and community to find new ways of relating to each other to provide more adequately for the good of the individual student and the good of the community.
- identifies gaps in services not provided by the school district and makes recommendations to the district to meet student needs.
- identifies gaps in services not met by existing community agencies and makes recommendations to community planners.
- communicates to students, the home, and the community the availability of special school programs and resources and facilitates the delivery of these services.
- maintains a current community resource file of agencies, programs, and services and facilitates the delivery of these resources for the benefit of the student, family, and school.

- provides an effective communication system for parents to give feedback to school personnel.

- may participate on the special education Admissions, Review, and Dismissal Committee providing sociological data necessary to planning strategies for productive learning activities.

- serves in a consultant role to principal and other school staff to provide information gathered from school records and parent conferences on students and assists in the integration of this information into curriculum planning, proper placement of students, and formulation of other plans of action to assist students.

- assists in the design and implementation of programs alternative to suspension and expulsion and dropping out.

- identifies groups of children who may be emotionally vulnerable because of linguistic or cultural differences who are in need of support and reassurance.

- mediates interaction between the individual and the school system.

- assists the school and community to understand the educational implications of poverty, and the rapid and devasting social changes and results of urban decay on children.

- helps students to acquire a sense of competence, a readiness for continued learning, and a capacity to adapt to change.

- assists parents to acquire a feeling of competence in parenting and to become involved in student's learning.

- analyzes a student's needs and with the cooperation of school staff develops a plan for meeting the needs, develops alternatives, and evaluates consequences or effectiveness of the plan.

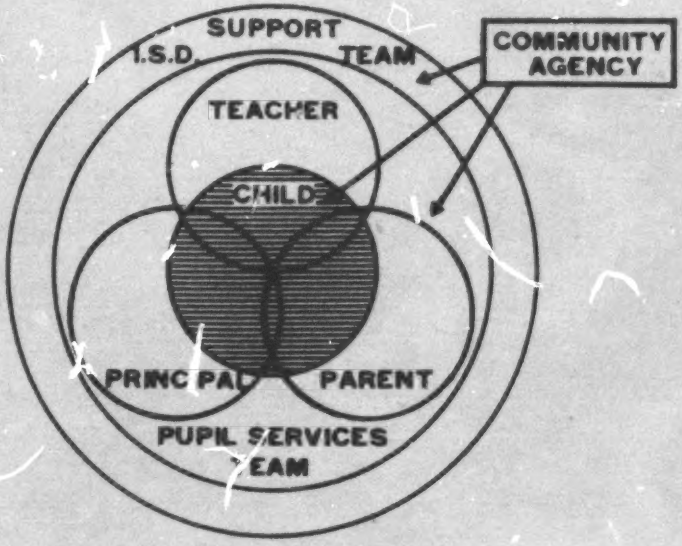
- conducts research and/or case studies that will add to the development of effective educational intervention strategies.

The Pupil Services Team

The visiting teacher's greatest effectiveness is achieved by being able to function as a member of an interdisciplinary team. In the school setting this team effort provides the opportunity for the visiting teacher to share responsibility with instructional, curricula, guidance and other helping services staff for meeting the educational, social, emotional, and physical growth needs of students. The services of this team should be available to all students and should constitute a significant resource for parents, teachers, and administrators as well as students.

Regardless of the organizational structure of the team, the focus should remain on the child as shown in the proposed model for a pupil services team.

Proposed Model for a Pupil Services Team



GUIDING PRINCIPLES

A. Guiding Principles for Establishing a Visiting Teacher Program

The local school district has primary responsibility for planning, organizing, and implementing the visiting teacher program. Some guidelines/procedures for initiation of a visiting teacher program follow.

I. PLANNING

- Assess the needs of the school/community for visiting teacher services.
- Establish goals for the visiting teacher program.
- State precise comprehensive objectives for the program.
- Plan activities to meet these objectives which can be specifically stated in terms of students' and parents' and school outcomes.
- Evaluate results in terms of benefits to students, families, and school.

II. ORGANIZING

- Assign a certified visiting teacher with no administrative authority on a full time-basis to provide visiting teacher services.
- Provide an administrator to actively assume responsibility for coordination of pupil services and for the visiting teacher as a staff person, and for evaluating the performance of the visiting teacher in terms of the goals and objectives of the program.
- Assign personnel so that each campus is systematically serviced.

- Provide office space and appropriate furniture--preferably centrally located to administration and other pupil services.

- Make available the equivalent of one-fourth time clerk/secretary for each visiting teacher.

- Provide a general bulletin for each building principal describing the role of the visiting teacher and including the referral procedures.

- Maintain records in accordance with the Open Records Law.

III. IMPLEMENTING THE PROGRAM

- Develop a job description for the visiting teacher.

- Establish a clearly identified and structured procedure for referrals using a referral form designed to meet local school district needs.

- Clear all referrals through building principal or the professional staff member whom the principal designates.

- Cooperate with the building principal in determining priorities for the school.

- Establish an organized system of record keeping which includes (1) the referral, (2) a brief statement of the problem, (3) a brief factual statement of contacts with parents, teachers, other school personnel, or community agencies, and (4) plans for solution.

- Provide for the visiting teacher to have access to all school records.

- Provide opportunity for the visiting teacher to discuss referrals with the principal and instructional or pupil services personnel, before making a parent contact.

The case records of the visiting teacher should:

1. Comply with the provisions of Section 438 of Public Law 93-380, the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974.

2. Provide data on factors affecting children's learning, and the frequency and kinds of problems contributing to poor school performance.

3. Document intervention strategies and their effectiveness.

4. Contain data for evaluating effectiveness of court referrals.

5. Include data concerning unmet needs of students in the school and community.

- Establish a systematic method for feeding this information back into the systems--school, home, and community--as data base for planning preventive programs.

- Encourage the team effort by providing for cooperation and communication with all school personnel.

- Provide for inservice training (or staff development) for visiting teachers.

- Work jointly with all school personnel in helping to meet the education-related needs of students.

- Provide a visiting teacher student ratio not to exceed 1 per 2,000. A more desirable ratio would be 1 per 1,500 for more effective services to students and families.

- Involve all appropriate school personnel in seeking solutions to the attendance problems of students.

B. Allocation

School districts may add visiting teachers to their staff as provided in the Texas Education Code, Bulletin 721, Texas Education Agency, 16.07 Public Schools, Foundation School Program, Subchapter B. Classification of Professional Positions and Services.

16.07. Classification

To effectuate the Foundation School Program here guaranteed, school districts are authorized to utilize the following professional positions, or units, and services:

(C) special service teachers, among which shall be included librarians, school nurses, school physicians, visiting teachers, and itinerant teachers.

16.15. Special Service Teacher Units

(b) Districts which have 20 or more approved classroom teacher units shall be eligible for one special service teacher unit for each 20 classroom teacher units, no credit to be given for fractions.

16.16. Comprehensive Special Education Program for Exceptional Children

(d) ...The state commissioner of education shall establish qualifications for special service teachers which shall be subject to regulations made by the State Board of Education.

This allocation formula may also be found in the Administrative Procedures for the Policies of the State Board of Education, Chapter 4 Public School Finance; Item 4103, Allocation of Professional Units.

C. Qualifications and Certification

Qualifications

The success of any program is largely dependent on the competency, conviction, and skill of the personnel involved. Selection of personnel is of major importance in developing a well-functioning visiting teacher service. The selection of appropriate visiting teacher personnel should include the consideration of personality characteristics, educational qualifications, and previous employment experience.

The visiting teacher's background must reflect diverse facets of education. The disciplines of education, psychology, social sciences, and social work promote skills necessary to the visiting teacher profession. Such disciplines provide the proper perspective concerning human behavior, multicultural understanding, and social environment.

Certification

The visiting teacher must meet Texas Education Agency certification requirements.

Visiting teacher certification was approved by the State Board of Education in March, 1969, to be effective in the fall of 1971.

To obtain a visiting teacher's certificate, a teacher must

- hold a provisional teacher's certificate;
- complete either three years of successful and creditable teaching experience in an accredited school, or three years of successful experience in an approved social welfare agency;
- complete a 36-hour program beyond the bachelor's degree, 18 of which must be graduate level.

Upon the request of an employing superintendent, a special assignment permit will be issued to a person who has:

- a bachelor's degree from an accredited school;
- a provisional teaching certificate or a one-year teaching certificate;
- a minimum of three years of successful teaching experience or three years in an approved social welfare agency;
- fifteen hours of graduate course work in social or behavioral science, six of which must be in work required of visiting teachers in the specialized area.

The special assignment permit may be issued and renewed annually for three scholastic years, subject to a completion of at least six semester hours leading to visiting teacher's certificate each year.

The responsibility for establishing the sequence of course work shall rest with the institution, except for out-of-state teachers.

D. Special Assignments Areas

The visiting teacher works with all children in the school district including the following areas serving special populations.

Early Childhood Education
Bilingual Education
Special Education
Education for the Gifted
Title I Migrant
Title I
Parental Involvement
Community Involvement

The Visiting Teachers

Who do they work with to help a child?